APCO International

Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials-International

Member Assistance Advisory Program (MAAP) Report

Waukesha County Communications

Waukesha, Wisconsin

Dec. 11 - 14, 2005

ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC-SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS OFFICIALS INTERNATIONAL, INC.

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1. **Executive Summary**

On behalf of the County Executive's Office, Waukesha County Labor Relations Manager Jim Richter requested that the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials International, Inc. (APCO), through the Member Assistance Advisory Program (MAAP), conduct a review of Waukesha County Communications (WCC). APCO was asked to accomplish the following:

- Review center documents (SOPs, organizational chart, etc.);

- Assess operational parameters and practices by access to each shift;

- Conduct interviews with selected parties from line staff through center management;

- Conduct interviews with representatives of the various center constituencies;

- Observe call-processing and dispatch functionality, as defined, practiced and modeled;

- Observe staff teamwork, team working identity, problem-solving and resolution practices;

- Review staffing project recently completed;

- Provide assistance with staffing documents/tools in determining personnel resources;

- Assess effectiveness of training on actual observed performance;

- Provide observation of effectiveness of the Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) Program and quality-assurance effort;

- Identify internal/external issues that affect the delivery of the best level of service to the public.

The APCO MAAP team conducted an onsite visit from Sunday, December 11, through Wednesday, December 14, 2005. The evaluation team of peers within the public safety communications industry consisted of the following members:

Mark A. Morgan, Assistant Director (Team Leader)

Valley Communications Center, WA

Randy Kerr, Captain, Technical Services Division

Alachua County Sheriff's Office, FL

John Gibson, County Administrator

Washington County, AR

The MAAP team spent a great deal of time working with Waukesha County staff, management and customer representatives to gather their feedback about the center and its operation. The team also spent several hours observing the activity taking place in the center.

The MAAP team found WCC to be a relatively young consolidated center, at approximately 18 months since the first PSAP transitioned. The last PSAP to move to WCC was the City of Brookfield, which occurred 10 months ago. WCC is comprised of dedicated, hard-working public safety professionals still in the early developmental stages of a potentially thriving focal point for Waukesha

County public safety. WCC has many very positive characteristics, such as adequate funding, a beautiful new facility, the latest public safety technology and a communications staff committed to their role in public safety. Although there is room for improvement, WCC has gotten a great start over its first few months of existence.

The collective goal of stakeholders, managers, supervisors and telecommunicators is for WCC to develop into a very successful organization. Furthermore, the desire is that they will be the most attractive option in the near future for Waukesha County public safety departments evaluating their emergency communications service. In recognition of those objectives, the team offers recommendations throughout this report. An inclusive list of the recommendations is provided in Appendix A in summary form for ease of review.

2. Community and Agency Description

Waukesha County is located in southeast Wisconsin near the city of Milwaukee. WCC serves an estimated service population of 175,000 and enjoys the diversity of suburban and rural communities.

Under the direction of the Waukesha County executive, through the director of emergency management, the WCC staff provides law enforcement, fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) communications services to the majority of public safety agencies within Waukesha County. The Waukesha County Board approves the county's budget, which includes funding the full cost of operating WCC. The following is a list of communities served by WCC and the services provided:

Big Bend/Vernon Police/Fire/EMS

City of Brookfield Police/Fire/EMS

Town of Brookfield Police/Fire/EMS

Village of Butler Police/Fire/EMS

Village of Chenequa Police

City of Delafield Police/Fire/EMS

Town of Delafield Fire/EMS

Village of Dousman Police/Fire/EMS

Village of Eagle Police

Wales/Genesee Fire/EMS

Village of Hartland Police/Fire/EMS

Village of Lac Le Belle Police

Lake County Fire/EMS

Town of Lisbon Police/Fire/EMS

Town of Merton Fire/EMS

Village of Merton Fire/EMS

Village of Nashotah Police

North Lake Fire

Village of North Prairie Police

Town of Oconomowoc Police

Village of Oconomowoc Lake Police

Okauchee Fire/EMS

City of Pewaukee Police

Village of Pewaukee Police

Pewaukee Fire/EMS

Stone Bank Fire/EMS

Town of Summit Police/Fire/EMS

Village of Sussex Fire/EMS

Town of Waukesha Fire/EMS

Waukesha County Sheriff

3. Evaluation Methodology

The methodology used for this MAAP visit was consistent with other reviews undertaken by APCO. The review involved interviewing as many employees, customer-agency representatives and other stakeholders as possible and reviewing as many documents as possible to provide the team with insight into the history, operations and future direction of Waukesha County Communications.

List of Contacts/Interviews

Waukesha County/WCC:

- Dan Vrakas, County Executive, Waukesha County

- Norm Cummings, Director of Administration, Waukesha County

- Allison Bussler, Chief of Staff, Waukesha County

- James Dwyer, Chairman, Waukesha County Board

- Richard Tuma, Director of Emergency Preparedness, WCC

- WCC Supervisory Staff

- WCC Telecommunicators

- WCC IT Staff

- Chris Patterson, Waukesha County Radio System Manager

- James Richter, Labor Relations Manager, Waukesha County

- Sue Zastrow, Employment Services Manager

- Renee Gage, Senior Human Resources Analyst

- Richard Bolte, Director or Public Works, Waukesha County

WCC Customers or Stakeholders:

- Steve Marks, Deputy Inspector, Waukesha County Sheriff

- Lyndell Smith, Computer Coordinator, Waukesha County Sheriff

- Eric Severson, Captain, Waukesha County Sheriff

- Jeff Speaker, Mayor, City of Brookfield

- Dean Marquardt, Director of Administration, City of Brookfield

- John Dahms, Fire Chief, Brookfield Fire Department

- Jeffrey Johnson, Assistant Chief Committee, Brookfield Fire Department and Chairman of Fire Protocols

- Daniel Tushaus, Chief of Police, Brookfield Police Department

- Phil Horter, Captain, Brookfield Police Department

- Jim Adlam, Captain, Brookfield Police Department

- Robert Rosch, Chief, Hartland Police Department

- Tim Otto, Captain, Village of Pewaukee Police Department

- David Reid, Captain, Chenequa Police Department, Chair of Police Protocol Committee

- Donald Wiemer, Chief of Police, Village of Oconomowoc Lake Police Department and Chairman of the Dispatch Operations Commission

- Matthew Pinter, Chief, Pewaukee Fire Department

- Douglas Brahm, Fire Chief, Lisbon Fire Department

- Daniel Buchholtz, Fire Chief, Town of Waukesha Fire Department

- Allen Wilde, Chief, Hartland Fire Department

- David Dean, Assistant Chief, Hartland Fire Department

- Corky Curtis, Fire Chief, Sussex Fire Department

4. __Review of Center Documents__

The APCO team reviewed many documents that were deemed pertinent to the functionality or performance of WCC. The following is a non-inclusive list of the documents reviewed:

WCC Standard Operating Procedures

List of Approved and Unapproved Services of WCC

Consolidation Study Reports

Summary of WCC Recruitment/Hiring Practices

WCC Police Protocols Committee Meeting Minutes

WCC Fire Protocols Committee Meeting Minutes

WCC and Waukesha County Correspondence

Inquiries and Summary of Inquiries

Summary of Turnover Analysis

Local News Articles

Correspondence to the Team from Employees and Stakeholders

5. <u>Overview of Perceptions of Constituencies</u>

The interviews conducted by the team identified a diverse customer group with varying expectations. Most were complimentary of WCC staff and sensitive to the workload they manage and cognizant of the early stages of their growth. The vast majority were working well with WCC and attempting to resolve any concerns they had, through constructive processes. The general pulse of the customer group was that WCC has been struggling to meet everyone's objectives and many suggestions have been made, but now is the time to set a direction and resolve the concerns that have been voiced. There was an overall theme that the level of service could be better, specifically when accuracy and urgency are critical to their service delivery.

Two of the most challenging aspects of a consolidated communications center are meeting customer expectations and managing customer concerns. Successfully identifying and meeting customer expectations in a combined communications center can only be accomplished through an organized process that includes open communication, prioritization, goal-setting and the full support of quality-enhancement initiatives. WCC should be commended for recently launching a new quality-enhancement initiative that involves a group of customers and telecommunicators who meet to discuss operational challenges and explore alternatives.

Individual department expectations must be balanced with the impact of overall service to all customers and hard decisions made to prioritize the efforts of the staff in meeting service-level expectations. WCC leadership should be facilitating these discussions with full support of the county and Dispatch Operations Commission (DOC). (WCC Leadership is identified as the director and whatever upper-level support he feels necessary to bring consensus.) The customers should consistently be made aware of limitations and assist WCC in establishing priorities based on the collective needs of all stakeholders. The director should not be left in the position of having to make decisions about service delivery without stakeholder support or indecision. Stakeholders and WCC leadership should move forward as a group and take responsibility for their decisions, whether they result in a success or failure. When unsuccessful, all must go back to the drawing board and be ready to roll up their sleeves and find compromises to begin again. It is important to recognize that, because WCC is part of the delivery mechanism in Waukesha County public safety, its operations cannot take a back seat to police or fire operations, but must have equal consideration regarding operational impacts. Customer concerns can be managed successfully if there is willingness within WCC to monitor performance proactively, communicate openly about the results, seek input regarding improvement and update stakeholders on the progress of improvement initiatives.

The governance model in place can be successful, but the current political environment is not conducive to a concept based on partnership. High-level leaders (anyone above the director position) who are considered WCC stakeholders must change the focus from why WCC is not working for them to building a positive political environment that embraces the consolidation, or there is little likelihood any governance model will be successful. Political promises from the past, with no method to measure, are just that. They have no value now, other than as a platform to continue to point out the perceived shortcomings of WCC. Political discussions should take place at a very high level to solidify the value of a successful WCC, because every entity has a vested interest in this organization. Threats to withdraw from WCC are counterproductive and detract from its ability to focus on future success. Organizations must make decisions regarding the service they provide to their communities, however anyone that has experience operating a contemporary 9-1-1/dispatch center knows the difficult nature of the business, due to technical requirements, operational challenges and the demanding nature of their customers. If those challenges and the significant expense associated with this type of operation are not compelling enough reasons to embrace the consolidation, then they must move on to finding alternatives that will satisfy their community. Otherwise, productive processes that involve compromise, both politically and operationally, must be sought to move WCC into the future. Overall administration, financing and long-term strategic planning should be the focus of high-level leadership. The details of implementation and execution are better assigned to staff members. The

WCC director and leadership within Waukesha County must equally embrace the partnership, which includes open recognition of and genuine sensitivity to customer concerns. As a whole, if everyone's needs are the highest priority, with little to no regard for the impact on others, the current system will fail, simply due to an unreasonable definition of expectations and service delivery.

Recommendations:

- *(1a) High-level leadership from the organizations involved in WCC should hold a special series of meetings focused on:*
    - *Changing the current political environment and committing to one that supports the forward progress of WCC.*
    - *Solidifying the relationship as stakeholders in WCC, embracing the consolidation for the future and putting the politics of the past to rest.*
    - *Reaffirming support for the current WCC leadership or evaluating changes that would best serve future interests of WCC.*
    - *Solidifying support for the operational decision-making process (i.e., protocols committees and dispatch operations committee) to determine if the structure is effective and balanced, what level of influence they have, how are WCC operational impacts balanced with customer demands, who makes final decisions and what the process is if no consensus can be reached.*

- Potential changes to the governance model, including a consortium model would allow the larger stakeholders to have an equal share in governing and financing the center. (All stakeholders would need to have an adequate voice for operational decisions in any new model being considered.)

- *(1b) The same leadership group is encouraged to meet periodically after the special series of meetings, to continue developing those partnerships. That synergy will not only support success at WCC, but could establish WCC as the focal point for public safety in Waukesha County. (Other agreements can be forged around a successful consolidation, such as shared regional resources, combined/regional training, mutual-aid agreements, regional grant opportunities, etc.)*

6. <u>Assessment of Operational Parameters and Practices; Call-processing, Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) Program and Dispatching Functionality</u>

While observing the telecommunicators, the team was impressed with the level of professionalism in their approach to citizens on the phone and field personnel on the radio. The majority of WCC's call-answering and dispatching processes were found to be in line with contemporary public safety practices. WCC uses dedicated call-receivers to obtain information from the public, while the dispatcher is alerting public safety responders simultaneously. There was some concern from customers that this technique was ineffective, as their previous communications center had a single person perform both functions.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both concepts. The primary advantage for a smaller operation to have one person perform both roles is the same person speaking to the reporting party can relay information more quickly to responders. The most significant disadvantage is that one person can do only so much and will begin to experience difficulties if anything complicates the incident or if they are forced to process simultaneous incidents.

In a larger operation such as WCC (potentially on the verge of further growth), the single-person approach becomes less realistic. At a certain volume of activity, the dispatcher cannot focus on all the tasks associated with the responding units and still manage the call(s). The primary advantage in separating the call-receiver and dispatcher roles is allowing the call-receiver to

manage the callers efficiently while the dispatcher simultaneously alerts and relays information to the responders. It also provides depth of resources that permits more activity to be managed successfully.

The team does not advocate a change in this model, as it would be going back to a lesser standard of service for the volume of WCC. Instead, the focus should remain on the level of competence within WCC and their ability to make operational adjustments to meet expectations.

WCC uses a Spillman Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system that was chosen as a tightly integrated package including, a police records management system (RMS) and a jail management component. Unfortunately, it is clear that the priority for the selection of the CAD system was weighed too heavily on providing RMS information collected in past communications centers that were not as complex or demanding as the environment at WCC. In its current configuration, the CAD system is not supporting the primary mission of WCC (emergency call-receiving, incident-dispatching and tracking) very effectively. Routine delays in processing and a cumbersome number of keystrokes/mouse clicks make the system nearly unusable during incidents/periods that cause a furious pace for the telecommunicators. Unfortunately, furiously paced periods are becoming more commonplace for WCC (traffic stops, pursuits, simultaneous incidents, etc.), but the real concern is that they will become more frequent and more intense as WCC grows or the departments they serve get busier.

The team was concerned about functionality in the current CAD system configuration, which is designed to support location verification. Telecommunicators describe routine problems where street signs at intersections do not match the choices the call-receiver is offered by the CAD System during location verification, because the CAD system database does not match the actual street signage. Properly configured contemporary CAD systems should be able to provide aliases to the call-receiver for roadways that have multiple names, to avoid them having to convert the street names in their minds or referring to an alternate map. This is a significant obstacle to quick processing and accurate locations, which have been reported as two major customer expectations that are not being met satisfactorily.

Regardless of whether the system was designed to support a slower pace, less complexity or the current configuration is a result of "work-arounds," WCC's overall objective of higher accuracy and faster processing speed will be very difficult to achieve with this system configuration. The team was concerned about the overall performance of the CAD system (the most critical tool for telecommunicators) and the additional stress it is causing the staff who are attempting to use it efficiently.

Recommendations:

- *(2a) WCC should evaluate the CAD system configuration with the vendor to determine what if any alternatives are available to:*
  - *Increase speed of processing (not only how quickly the system processor performs, but how quickly telecommunicators manipulate the system); and,*
  - *Increase the accuracy of location data (not only accuracy of the street names, but aliases that capture street-name changes as a citizen travels the roadway, which is frequent in Waukesha County).*
- *(2b) If the current configuration cannot be enhanced to meet performance objectives of WCC, they should consider an accelerated replacement of the system or accept that the performance goals of the highest possible levels of accuracy and speed may not be attainable.*
- *(2c) For future CAD system selection, the priority has to be on the mission of WCC. Call-processing and dispatching functionality has to be the highest priority and other roles that have the luxury of discretionary time (records, jail management, administration, etc.) should assume a lower priority.*
- *(2d) For future system design/acceptance, ensure that "work-arounds" are mitigated by developing an extremely detailed task analysis that becomes the system requirements and culminates with a stringent acceptance test. It would also be beneficial for WCC staff to visit larger/busier centers to*

observe their CAD system functionality before attempting to develop or have a consultant develop the system requirements.

The CAD system's mapping component, while complicated by an unusual addressing system, lacks the functionality that an ESRI-based (Environmental Systems Research Institute) mapping platform should provide. (ESRI Mapping platform means using an industry standard GIS platform.) Also, as WCC takes on additional clients in the county, it will be difficult to rely solely on the Waukesha County GIS Department to manage the map data. WCC cannot afford to allow public safety/service-related needs to get lost in the overall "GIS" landscape in Waukesha County. There should be a well-defined and developed liaison to County GIS to increase understanding of, as well as seek balance between, GIS principles, with the nature of 9-1-1 and dispatch operations.

Recommendations:

- *(3a) As part of the CAD system decision, evaluate the potential of transitioning to an ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute) interfaced mapping component.*
- *(3b) Regardless of the direction with CAD, mapping will always be a presence at WCC. Therefore, a dedicated GIS (Geographic Information System) staff position is needed to advocate for 9-1-1/dispatch operations and interface with Waukesha County GIS.*

The interface between the CAD system's mapping component and the phone system is also inadequate, which causes additional steps for the call-receiver when 9-1-1 calls are answered. Typical industry configurations include an interface that uses the 9-1-1 information from the phone system to plot the location on the digital map without additional steps. Today, WCC staff must go through the location-verification process (several keystrokes/mouse clicks) to have the call location plotted on their maps. Again, with the goal of speedier processing, every efficiency that can be capitalized on is important.

Recommendation:

- *(4) After the CAD system decision has been made, implement an adequate interface to the phone system that will allow wireline and wireless 9-1-1 calls to be plotted automatically upon answer by the call-receiver.*

As processes that require WCC intervention are requested, they must be assessed to determine the importance of the outcome, especially if they have a direct impact on the efficiency of the telecommunicators. Both WCC and their customers must resist the urge to artificially inflate the importance of their needs, but determine the right balance for the entire delivery system. The team observed several practices that not only create an unreasonable burden on WCC

operations, but are counterproductive to the efficiency goals expressed by the customers.

The team identified that WCC staff are required to collect middle initials and dates of birth of every caller or patient with whom the call-receiver comes in to contact. Not only is this practice operationally unreasonable, given the value of the information it provides, but it also creates an adversarial relationship with the caller, who will likely hesitate to call 9-1-1 again, given the overzealous interrogation. Only pertinent information related to the response should be gathered from the public and other opportunities, such as face-to-face contacts, should be used to gather additional information for investigatory purposes. Nevertheless, call-receivers should be required to obtain callback information for any witness to a crime or where circumstances require it. (With appropriate training and clear direction, call-receivers should have the judgment required to make this distinction.)

Recommendation:

- *(5) Modify the call-receiving procedures to exclude all inefficient practices that are deemed counterproductive to call-processing efficiency goals, such as obtaining investigatory/RMS information from Good Samaritan callers and medical patients in crisis. Redirecting tasks is a strategy*

identified within Project RETAINS as related to working conditions and job complexity.[1]

Another inefficient practice is cutting and pasting information from mobile-data messages to the CAD system.   If the information is critical to update electronically from the field, an interface should be developed to take the dispatcher out of the middle and allow them to focus on other time sensitive tasks.

Recommendation:

- *(6) Leverage available technology to create efficient mobile-data processes requiring no intervention by the telecommunicators.*

WCC has a state-of-the-art digital logging recorder that allows them to record all emergency calls and radio transmissions. It also has a remote operator feature that is intended to allow customers to play recordings remotely for investigations or reviews/critiques of their incidents without causing workload for those responsible for tape reproduction at WCC. Unfortunately, this has expanded to include real-time monitoring of 9-1-1 calls by the departments with access. It is

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[1] APCO Project RETAINS, Staffing and Retention in Public Safety Communication Centers: Effective Practices Guide and Staffing Workbook, Denver, CO, August 2005.

unclear what exposure of sensitive information exists under these circumstances. The team had a significant risk-management concern about this concept.

Recommendations:

- *(7a) Until WCC can have the Waukesha County risk manager verify that the envisioned use of the logging recorder is consistent with privacy protections in the state of Wisconsin, remote access should be discontinued.*

- *(7b) If the risk manager determines that there is acceptable risk involved in remotely accessing the logging recorder, his/her office and/or the Waukesha County attorney should assist WCC in drafting an appropriate policy related to use and security of remote-access software and consider requiring that a user agreement be signed by each individual who requests access.*

- *(7c) Notwithstanding the operational advantage that the remote-access software has provided some departments, the feature that allows monitoring 9-1-1 calls in real-time does not allow for WCC intervention to avoid releasing sensitive information. Therefore, the policy should require an adequate buffer of time (i.e., 24 hours) before departments may access the system for incident review.*

Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) triage criteria are available to telecommunicators in the form of Medical Priorities flipcharts. WCC recently stopped using Pro-QA, an electronic tool that assists call-receivers in determining the correct response to medical incidents. It was reported that the pressure to process incidents faster led to the change, as the electronic format was cumbersome and took too much time to process incidents. Fire/EMS customers reported similar concern about the timeliness of their dispatches. WCC has attempted to explain to their stakeholders that EMD is counterproductive to the desire of having the most efficient call-processing time. EMD typically is designed with the goal of sending the right number and type of resources, staffed with personnel with the appropriate level of training and dispatched at an appropriate level of urgency (i.e., less emergent gets a slower response, more emergent gets a faster response with lights and sirens). Although these are very responsible goals, telecommunicators using these programs often find it difficult to work through the chain of decisions quickly enough to satisfy customer expectations, especially when the program is new and not well-refined. And to complicate things at WCC, the CAD system is also cumbersome to use. Both CAD and EMD are slowing the processing rate significantly. A balance has to be struck between quickest speed and highest accuracy (appropriateness of the response). This is not unique to WCC. Although there are training initiatives recommended in this report to increase the telecommunicators' level of competence, WCC still may not be able to realistically meet the efficiency goals. Only after the critical training objectives recommended in this report can be

accomplished and the CAD system optimized will WCC stakeholders be able to realistically assess the EMD program. WCC and its stakeholders need to determine whether EMD is right for their operation now that they have some experience with it and after they know how well the staff and CAD system can perform. This assessment must be based on the critical needs of the departments and balanced with the impact to WCC operations.

Recommendations:

- *(8) Once the training objectives outlined in this report can be accomplished and the CAD system is optimized, only then will it be possible to assess the Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) Program. The assessment should include:*
  - o *Review of call-processing speed to determine if effectively trained call-receivers can use the program within the acceptable range of call-processing times.*
  - o *Assessment of the potential modifications to the current EMD program or the method in which it is used to achieve the efficiency objectives of WCC. (This may require consultation with both the EMD and CAD system vendors to recommend a more efficient process.)*
  - o *Assessment of other EMD programs that may be a better fit for WCC and their stakeholders.*

o *An evaluation of the actual need for EMD in Waukesha County, considering any other operational alternatives that may result in appropriate responses (within WCC or the departments).*

At some point, WCC stakeholders and leadership set a performance goal of 90 seconds for dispatching emergency incidents. Although this may have been an honorable goal, it is a somewhat arbitrary measurement and it is very difficult to conclude whether it equates to success in the current environment. The team was asked to comment on the most commonly referred to national standards relating to incident-processing. The National Fire Protection Association has established incident-processing guidelines in Standard 1221, The Standard for Installation, Maintenance, and Use of Emergency Services Communications Systems.[2] With respect to the NFPA, this report will only refer WCC stakeholders to the applicable paragraphs (6.4.2 and 6.4.3) to research further. Although they are the most commonly referred-to standards, WCC leadership and stakeholders must decide whether it is in the best interest of WCC to adopt NFPA incident-processing standards, as there is no requirement to do so. An alternative may be to work through the recommendations in this report and, once adequate progress is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the greater majority of those involved, conduct an efficiency trial to benchmark the best performance of the center, using performance dimensions established by WCC leadership and stakeholders. For example, WCC may find that their emergency incident-

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[2] National Fire Protection Association. NFPA 1221: Standard for the Installation, Maintenance, and Use of Emergency Services Communications Systems. 2002 Edition. Quincy: July 2002.

processing/dispatching time is actually less than their 90 second goal or the NFPA standards.[3]

In this model, the objective would then be to manage upward trends from that benchmark vs. establishing an arbitrary ceiling that may or may not have practical benefit. Then, as new procedures or technology are introduced, the impact on those performance dimensions can be evaluated for acceptability.

Recommendations:

- *(9a) Assess the value of adopting NFPA Standard 1221 as it relates to emergency incident-processing. As with any performance measurement, there is a need to develop a process to measure the compliance and action plans developed to address non-compliance.*

- *(9b) If an alternative performance-measurement model is embraced, adequate time for addressing the recommendations in this report should be provided and progress satisfactorily demonstrated. Only then should a trial be conducted for at least 60 days, with the objective of benchmarking performance dimensions established by WCC leadership and stakeholders. Future goals would include managing upward trends from the benchmarked performance measurements.*

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[3] The standard can be purchased through NFPA http://www.nfpa.org

Another area of concern shared by customers was the perception that there were not enough 9-1-1 or business trunks to support the needs of WCC. The National Emergency Number Association (NENA) established NENA Standard 03-006 E9-1-1 Call Congestion Management.[4] The standard refers to the grade of service appropriate for a 9-1-1 center, which is P.01. P.01 is defined as the grade of service where no more than one call out of one hundred during the average busy hour will be blocked (busy). Also, the number of trunks should be based on the average busy hour in the average week during the busy season. A similar exercise can be conducted with business lines, however this varies widely, based on need and the ability to answer. (Adding trunks does not guarantee better service if there is not adequate staff to answer them.)

As WCC grows, it will be forced to deploy technology that will assist the call-receivers in managing spikes in the growing number of calls, such as phone-system queuing, recorded announcements to callers in queue and Automatic Call Distribution (ACD), which routes to the call-receiver who has been idle the longest. To compliment the ACD feature, WCC may need to consider in the future the feature that forces calls to the call-receiver without their intervention.

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[4] This standard can be found at www.nena.org in the Technical Standards.

Recommendations:

- *(10a) WCC should validate that their 9-1-1 trunking capacity is adequate based on NENA Standard 03-006, E9-1-1 Call Congestion Management.*

- *(10b) A similar validation should be conducted with the business lines as a baseline, but also considering local factors that may influence the needed capacity.*

- *(10c) Start exploring now with your phone-system vendor the implications of adding queuing, recorded announcements, ACD (Automatic Call Distribution) and forced-answer functionality. WCC may not implement all these functions immediately, but they can be evaluated for their value in meeting efficiency goals.*

The public-safety radio system operated by Waukesha County is a Motorola SmartNet® system with seven sites and thirteen channels. The system covers approximately 90 percent of the Waukesha County population. The Waukesha County Web site contains radio-system statistics by department, tracked monthly. System redundancy and integrity are enhanced by the placement of generators and UPS systems at each site. Sites are connected via fiber with route-redundant T1 circuits. Radio Frequency (RF) links provide a third level of redundancy for the fire-rescue paging system that remains on a conventional six-site simulcast system using two-tone sequential paging.

Interviews conducted during the assessment did not reveal any problems relating to system coverage. There is an ordinance in place requiring Bi-Directional Amplifiers (BDAs) in Waukesha County and in some municipalities. There are approximately thirty BDAs throughout the county. In terms of system capacity, it is impressive that only one instance of the system reaching a busy status in a five-year period has occurred and that was during a major storm. During the storm, there were instances of system-busy conditions with a brief duration of 2-3 seconds.

Interoperability is achieved through shared talk groups with most of the adjoining counties. WCC has the capability to operate on the National Mutual-Aid Calling Channel and the National Mutual-Aid TAC-3 channel. Field radios have the National Mutual Aid Calling channel plus all four National Mutual-Aid TAC channels. The law enforcement agencies dispatched by WCC use four primary talk groups, all of which can be accessed by each agency to achieve local interoperability between agencies in Waukesha County.

Operationally, WCC deploys four law enforcement dispatch positions using a total of four primary talk groups. One position dispatches for the Waukesha County Sheriff's Department; another for the City of Brookfield, Butler and Town of Brookfield; and the third and fourth for several smaller cities, towns and villages. The Waukesha County Sheriff's Department has a dedicated radio talk group, as does the city of Brookfield. The third position dispatches for the

smaller municipalities and uses two radio talk groups (TG2 and TG3) which remain patched together on a 24/7 basis. The reason cited for the permanent patch between the two was based on staffing capabilities of WCC. However, those interviewed indicated there were normally about nine police units on TG2 and twelve to fifteen on TG3 at any given time.

Talk-group assignments are based on specific agency use. From a jurisdictional standpoint, the sheriff's department handles calls along the interstate and at the park-and-ride stations, even though these locations fall within the municipal or corporate limits of some towns, cities or villages. One area of concern cited during the interviews involved situations where a sheriff's department unit required backup or an urgent type of call occurring on the interstate or in a park-and-ride station. In the event of a high-priority call, the sheriff's department would be dispatched on their talk group, and the police departments also with jurisdiction for the same area would be unaware of the call, because they operate on separate talk groups, even though they could have a squad much closer to the call than the sheriff's department.

WCC has personnel assigned to a teletype/information function to support each of the three law enforcement dispatchers. These positions also support the call-receiving function. The person assigned to the teletype/information function does not interact directly with law enforcement units by radio. They monitor the law enforcement radio talk groups and also receive verbal requests from the

dispatcher to run queries in the local/state/national criminal computer systems. The teletype/information operator then provides the results to the law enforcement dispatcher who relays them to the requesting law enforcement units by radio.

Recommendations:

- *(11a) Evaluate the permanent patch arrangement between TG2 and TG3 to determine if the call volume, as well as the number of law enforcement units supported, is most appropriately handled by a single dispatcher or whether it would justify two positions, possibly during peak call-load periods. If it is determined that a single dispatcher is sufficient for this responsibility on a 24/7 basis, WCC should consider eliminating the permanent patch arrangement and assigning all the units to either TG2 or TG3. This could free up a talk group for other purposes if needed. In the future, if additional law enforcement agencies are added as partners to the WCC, it would need to re-evaluate this arrangement.*

- *(11b) In order to provide a more effective law enforcement response and to enhance officer safety, WCC should consider a policy to simulcast priority law enforcement calls and requests for backup across multiple talk groups. In situations described previously where the sheriff's department responds to a priority call or needs urgent backup on the interstate or*

park-and-ride station, this process would alert police agencies with jurisdiction over the same area that may have units closer.

- *(11c) If there is not already a policy in place to use a common talk group or patched talk groups during multi-agency incidents, one should be developed. This provides a mechanism for law enforcement personnel involved in a common incident to communicate directly and immediately without having to rely on a dispatcher relay system which has a built-in delay and increased potential for error or miscommunications. This system should tie in directly with the use of the Incident Command System structure with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. In the event of a multi-agency, multi-discipline incident which involves law enforcement and fire-rescue, a unified command structure is applicable, which, depending on the magnitude of the incident, should have an established communications plan that addresses the operational needs of all components involved in the incident. This plan can be modified, expanded or reduced as the incident progresses and conditions change.*

- *(11d) The function of the teletype/information operators should be evaluated to consider an arrangement where a specific talk group or talk groups are established for law enforcement personnel to use for the purpose of requesting queries from the local, state and national criminal-justice computer system and RMS. This would allow law enforcement officers who are not running the requests from mobile computers to switch radio talk groups and communicate directly with a dispatcher to initiate the*

request and receive the response. The volume of activity associated with this function would dictate whether one for each dispatch position is required or whether a lesser number could be used. If implemented, policy associated with this arrangement must require close interaction between teletype dispatchers and the primary law enforcement dispatchers in the event a query resulted in the need for backup units such as encountering a wanted person, stolen vehicle, etc. It is also imperative for dispatchers to be aware of which radio talk-group units under their responsibility are operating on at any given time. This is a common arrangement in public safety communications centers of similar or larger size as WCC that handle law enforcement responsibilities.

7. <u>Interviews with Center Staff and Management; Teamwork, Identity & Problem Solving</u>

The team spent a great deal of time attempting to identify practices needed by WCC and those already in place that could be improved. Developing a successful contemporary communications center in a multi-faceted challenge that begins with the selection process. The team was impressed with the interest shown by the Waukesha County human-resources professionals that support WCC. A common industry phrase *"not everyone can do this job"* is very true, as telecommunicators have a unique combination of skills and characteristics that are uncommon among the population and difficult to identify through basic testing. They must be quick-thinking, mentally focused, technologically savvy, thick-skinned, street-smart, personable, empathetic and capable of multi-tasking, clear speaking, intent listening and fast keyboarding. Current WCC pre-employment testing includes a battery of skills tests that are extremely important, but the process could be expanded to include a psychological evaluation to ensure they select individuals with the right psychological profile as well. Also, because the speed of processing information is so critical in this environment, the current keyboarding standard of 25 words per minute may be lower than needed given the customer perception of slower-than-desired call-processing times.

Recommendations:

- *(12a) A psychological assessment by a forensic psychologist who specializes in public safety should be added to the selection process to identify candidates with the appropriate psychological profile for telecommunicators (and not the same profile for police officers or firefighters).*

- *(12b) Increase the keyboarding requirement to 30 words per minute and re-evaluate the need to increase it further in the future, as demands rise and efficiency becomes even more critical.*

In the case of WCC, many of the employees were transitioned from their previous communications centers during the consolidation. Since the work demands are likely different and the organizational dynamics are certainly different, many of these employees are, not surprisingly, struggling with their new situations. This is an individual and personal issue, so some may be struggling more than others and it may be difficult to detect. But those that departed close-knit family atmospheres with close physical proximity to the public-safety responders they served are more likely to have an experience similar to grieving the loss of a loved one. It may take these individuals much longer to fully assimilate into a consolidated environment, not because they are disloyal to WCC, but because they haven't fully processed the change and found their

identity in the new surroundings. The human-resources staff was determined to deal directly with this phenomenon when interviewed by the team.

Recommendations:

- *(13a) With the assistance of the Human Resources Department, identify counseling resources that can assist relocated employees with the assimilation process into WCC, similar to those used in other industries when involuntary career changes occur. Make the opportunity voluntary, confidential and outside WCC to get the best possible result.*
- *(13b) These employees should also be encouraged to access Waukesha County's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) in the future as needed.*

The most successful communications center managers are multi-faceted individuals with skills to manage people, administration, operations and technology. Many times, these individuals are called to be all things to all people, but that is an unrealistic expectation in such a complex environment as a communications center. The team believes the current organizational structure is not conducive to the level of performance that WCC stakeholders are demanding. Specifically, the training responsibility must be elevated to have a dedicated individual who can focus the majority of his time on development of the training programs/materials and coordination/delivery of the training. Additionally, there is an understandable operational void between the director

and supervisors, all having to give up time focusing on their other responsibilities to dedicate to analyzing operations, developing solutions and managing procedural changes. Because these two responsibilities go hand in hand, the team believes the best approach is to add a Training & Operations Manager.

Recommendations:

- *(14a) Waukesha County should explore an additional management position to compliment the director and take responsibility for operations, training and quality-enhancement initiatives. The goal would be to allow the director to focus on managing the center overall, setting the leadership direction and coordinating with high-level stakeholders. In a partnership with the director, the training & operations manager could represent WCC on various operational and technical workgroups, liaise with customer representatives on operational matters and oversee the training and quality-assurance programs. A future consideration would be having the supervisors report to the training & operations manager, but initially this individual will be in high demand.*

- *(14b) If the training & operations manager is supported, the best opportunity for success would be for the training & operations manager to have an operational and training background from a contemporary public safety communications center, preferably a consolidated center. The*

successful candidate should have or be required to develop shortly after

selection, the following skills/training:

- o *Job task-analysis techniques,*

- o *Training-content development,*

- o *Adult-learning styles,*

- o *Contemporary training-delivery techniques and mechanisms,*

- o *Performance measurement, to include analysis of quality assurance, inquiries, incident-processing statistics and other relevant operational data,*

- o *Excellent customer-service techniques; and,*

- o *Effective supervisory techniques/skills (if determined that supervisors will report to this individual).*

8. **Staffing & Staffing Projection Tools**

There are two distinctions that are important to understand when referring to communications center staffing. First is "authorized" staffing or the "staffing model," which refers to the numbers and types of positions an organization is authorized to hire. Then, there is the actual staffing level, which is the number of people who are actually productive in their positions, not including those in training or unavailable due to long-term leave, etc.

It is difficult to determine at this time whether the staffing model at WCC fully supports the workload. It is clear, however, that the actual staffing level is inadequate. Although a certain amount of overtime should be expected in public safety, turnover has created a higher-than-desired overtime rate at a time when timeoff is already limited. Unfortunately, this will likely get worse before it gets better for the WCC staff, due to a difficult cycle in which they find themselves. The cycle starts at any of these points: high turnover, low opportunity for timeoff, high overtime, low opportunity for training, high mistake rate, customer scrutiny, negative media coverage, pressure-cooker environment, high stress rate and employee burnout. The result is a minimal opportunity for good morale or healthy employees, leading to more turnover. In the next section of this report, recommendations are made to start the process of changing this cycle, beginning with a solid foundation of aggressive training. The employees who commit to working through the next phase of WCC's evolution will see positive results if the

perpetual cycle can be broken, but it will come with some initial sacrifice. The hope is that all will commit to this process, but WCC leadership should be prepared for the reality that some employees may not be able to continue in this environment, even short term. Therefore, more turnover should be expected, even as these recommendations are implemented. The goal must be to develop a core staff of individuals with solid skills who can take WCC into the future. Short-term crisis must not distract from that long-term goal.

WCC should be as aggressive as possible in filling open positions. Waukesha County leadership can support that endeavor by allowing WCC to temporarily over-staff a number of positions to offset turnover. Then, as some of the aggressive training recommendations start to take effect, WCC will be in a much better position of determining how many, if any, positions should be added to the staffing model.

In an operation as new as WCC with changing priorities, the most effective way to determine how many staff are needed would be to add more until the work is getting done adequately, training and career development are being supported fully, timeoff is occurring consistently, overtime becomes manageable and the turnover rate normalizes. The reality is that this staffing technique is rarely politically acceptable. Therefore, it is important to find a scientifically based tool to help validate the staffing model. APCO International recently completed Project RETAINS. This was a significant undertaking with the assistance from

the Denver Institute of Research to determine the best practices for developing a staffing model for communications centers, as well as retaining employees once they are hired and trained. The timing could not be better for WCC, as the staffing tool helps the user organize their workload data, determine their turnover rate, calculate typical productivity rates for employees and load all this into a tool that will provide a recommended staffing model.

Recommendations:

- *(15a) WCC should recruit aggressively to fill any open positions as soon as possible.*

- *(15b) Waukesha County should support WCC by temporarily authorizing at least seventeen percent over-staffing, which is the national average turnover rate for communications centers (WCC is much higher currently), allowing the best possible opportunity for the staff to become fully productive in the near future.*

- *(15c) Waukesha County should support the WCC director in attending an APCO Project RETAINS educational session as soon as possible, to allow future assessment of the staffing model and to learn more about retention techniques identified during the project.*

9. <u>Training, Performance and Service Delivery</u>

Training was the common theme reported to the team regarding WCC and the perceptions of substandard performance. From the telecommunicators, supervisors and customers, there is agreement that, in order to become more successful, WCC must invest in more training.

The supervisory staff must have adequate training to meet the challenges that WCC faces today. In a communications environment, the challenges are sometimes unique. For this reason, it is important to seek out specialized resources (preferably communications professionals) that can provide practical supervision techniques for use in their environment, as well as more general topics that can be taught by any qualified instructor. Also, WCC would benefit greatly from general leadership training, team-building and skills-training on the functions of the call-receiver and dispatcher roles. All supervisors should be allowed to attend this training, so a plan should be developed that would allow another person to supervise the floor temporarily. Also, management must provide adequate support to ensure this training is conducted, as it is a very high priority if WCC is to meet their performance goals.

Recommendations:

- *(16) Prioritize and provide the following training to the supervisors:*

o *Basic communications center supervision techniques, including such topics as stress management (theirs and their subordinates), evaluation/coaching techniques, dealing with disruptive behavior in a high-liability risk environment, public safety customer service, etc.*

o *County human-resources professionals should arrange for more generalized training, including giving/receiving constructive criticism, conflict resolution, emotional maturity in the workplace, team-building, attendance strategies (FMLA familiarization, etc.), effective use of disciplinary action, etc.*

o *The director should facilitate and participate in leadership training as a group with the supervisors and other management employees. The focus of this training should be identifying what WCC leadership is doing well, what could be done better and what needs to be started. Also, strategies, action plans and timelines to get those things done and begin to change the culture from "putting out fires" to one of "reaching center excellence".*

o *Technical application user training to allow all supervisors to become more proficient and reduce errors related to all systems, such as the scheduling application, quality-assurance applications, radio consoles, CAD/mapping applications, etc.*

As with the management of WCC, the supervisory staff is trying to bring a group of diverse employees together, while coping with the fallout of constant change in this new organization. They are an exceptional group of people with sincere

desire to make WCC a more successful organization, but it is clear that they are frustrated. As the supervisors described their desire to move the organization forward, they want to be held accountable. There is a perception that their opportunities and levels of accountability are inequitable. They reported that their direction was unclear at times, due to the changing nature of operations at WCC. They expressed desire to be more involved in the decision-making process, such as having their input sought routinely about the impact of potential operational changes. There is also a perception that their offers to help with training and other responsibilities go unanswered.

Recommendations:

- *(17a) The director would benefit from demonstrating clearly that the supervisors are being held to equitable standards of performance and accountability.*

- *(17b) Opportunities for training and other assignments should be offered in an equitable manner.*

- *(17c) As supervisors receive more training, the expectations should rise by setting individual goals and demonstrating results.*

- *(17d) Given proper training and clear objectives, the supervisors will then need to take ownership of their performance as the core leadership of WCC, by setting common goals for the leadership group to attain together*

and periodically reporting back to the director on their progress. Supervisor unity has to be a top priority.

- *(17e) Supervisor meetings should evolve to include a component of repetitive training and review of leadership expectations by the director.*

The supervisors have varying degrees of training related to the functions they oversee, specifically call-answering and dispatching. They were appropriately hired to supervise and not to perform as telecommunicators, but they need a basis for directing the work of the individuals in their charge. WCC has relied on their previous experience for that fundamental basis, however WCC has unique procedures and technical challenges that they should be familiar with in order to assist the telecommunicators.

Recommendations:

- *(18a) Develop an initial supervisor training program that includes all supervisory and administrative functions, but also has a heavy focus on operations to ensure they have a thorough understanding of the positions they oversee.*

- *(18b) Using the new supervisor training program, validate what level of training all current supervisors have and provide training as needed.*

WCC has an effective entry-level training program for telecommunicators, but struggles to maintain the integrity of the initial training process. It was described that at times, the need for productive staff outweighs the need to provide enough time for the entry-level employee to complete their training hours fully. This creates an environment where the floor supervisor or another telecommunicator must oversee an inexperienced employee remotely instead of a trainer who can provide their full attention to detecting a trainee error and intervening. This practice could be contributing to the customer perception that WCC's performance level is lower than desirable.

Recommendation:

- *(19) To complement the current training program, develop a formal process with minimum time requirements and competency validation before releasing a trainee to work without direct supervision of a Communications Training Officer (CTO).*

The current schedule allows for a 15-minute briefing at the beginning of each shift. This is a beneficial time that was described as being taken less seriously by employees or not managed effectively by the supervisors. This is an opportunity lost for meaningful repetitive training that would benefit the WCC staff. Also, typically there are intermittent slow or idle periods for telecommunicators that could become training opportunities, if such a program

were developed. The program could be as simple as posing a question for the group at the beginning of a shift (problem-based learning technique) that they answer either independently or as a group during the course of the shift, using whatever resources would normally be available to them. The objective of this type of program is to identify specific performance challenges, such as upgrading fire incidents to higher alarms, and through aggressive repetitive training have the challenge transform into instinctive behavior that, when required, will become automatic for the dispatcher. In the beginning, WCC may want to focus more on specific performance challenges, but the long-term focus should shift to a priority system where the most repetitive training addresses tasks that have the highest risk of liability exposure and are the least frequently performed (officer/firefighter calls for help, vehicle pursuits, multiple alarm fires, etc.). Although there may be some push-back regarding this program at first, the knowledge base of the telecommunicators will increase significantly and they will begin to find satisfaction in being more effective. (At times, healthy competition can even be a positive by-product.)

Recommendation:

- *(20) Develop a repetitive training program that includes quick bursts of training targeting specific performance challenges or the highest risk/lowest frequency tasks performed by WCC dispatchers, then use the shift-briefing time and slow time on shifts to conduct the repetitive training.*

Continuing education is necessary for any specialized position. Deputies/officers would not be allowed to carry a weapon or firefighters allowed to handle hazardous materials without periodic training. The telecommunicators have responsibilities that expose WCC to similar liability and frequently encounter situations requiring them to perform critical tasks, just as field personnel experience. The supervisors and telecommunicators report that they rarely attend training, such as a seminar or conference, due to financial constraints. Although it does require financial support, there are industry organizations like APCO that produce quality telecommunicator training at reasonable costs. There are many online courses for telecommunicators that are reasonably inexpensive and convenient, requiring no travel or lodging. Finally, all training, changes to policy/procedure, customer service initiatives, management directives and performance expectations must be presented in writing, then formally reviewed and documented. Employees should be held accountable for understanding their responsibilities and performing at the expected level, based on the training they have received. The inability to perform adequately after effective training must be cause for removal from the position.

Recommendations:

- *(21a) Implement a continuing-education program that includes periodic retraining of telecommunicators specific to their duties three to four times*

a year. The program should include any training-certification requirements.

- *(21b) Support telecommunicator training by outside resources, such as seminars, conferences, training meetings, etc. To add more overall value, also require that the telecommunicators bring back the information and share it with the others at WCC by teaching or developing a training bulletin for everyone's benefit. If financial resources do not allow frequent attendance at training events, it is strongly recommended that WCC support telecommunicators' participation in online training courses or coordinate resources with other local agency's to share training expertise.*

Another program that would benefit WCC greatly is a remedial training program. Although it may have a negative connotation for telecommunicators, the ability to identify someone struggling with a performance challenge and providing focused intense training in that area is extremely beneficial. Remedial training should be flexible and tailored to the needs of the individual. The goal is to bring that telecommunicator's performance to the highest possible level, so he can contribute to the overall goals of WCC.

Recommendation:

- *(22) Implement a remedial training program where the objectives are to identify telecommunicators who need extra help, create a non-threatening*

and respectful environment conducive to learning and dedicate time to reviewing and practicing with them.

After a stringent selection process and quality training, the next step is monitoring the level of performance. WCC is commended for recently implementing a quality-assurance (QA) program and dedicating a supervisor to this endeavor. WCC is encouraged to move forward with plans to expand the program to include review of all types of calls. QA is simply a monitoring technique whereby a set of performance standards for all relevant performance dimensions are developed to measure against, then periodic sampling (spot-checking) is done to verify compliance by listening to recordings or real-time monitoring. Random sampling of general performance dimensions will provide overall performance data, useful for identifying excellent performers, determining training needs and/or ineffective procedures. QA can also be used to monitor a specific set of dimensions on a temporary basis to verify compliance with a new or modified procedure. This will be critical for WCC as future quality enhancements are introduced to the telecommunicators. The results may vary widely among the staff, allowing the supervisors to praise those committed to the change and coach those who may need more encouragement.

Successful QA must include consistent feedback spanning the full range of performance, from outstanding to unacceptable. In that regard, WCC leadership is commended for the recent addition of a bulletin board displaying employee

names who have outstanding QA scores, not only for the recognition, but for the healthy competition it may spark.

Recommendations:

- *(23) The quality-assurance (QA) program should be enhanced to monitor all performance and compliance with all policy/procedure, including:*
  - *Development of performance dimensions to evaluate, such as "demonstrates a sense of urgency" or "follows established protocols."*
  - *Development of standards where possible to measure against, such as "entered the initial incident in 30 seconds" or "alerted responding units within in 10 seconds."*
  - *Commitment to number of samples/frequency of samples.*
  - *Initial data used as benchmark for future comparison in areas such as improved call-processing speed.*
  - *Individual performance results, good and bad, reviewed with the staff, including periodic statistics reflecting ongoing rate of success.*
  - *Periodic analysis of data to determine systemic problems or training needs.*
  - *Inform and update stakeholders on progress concerning QA goals, illustrating the data in an understandable format, such as a series of graphs.*

There was a significant amount of frustration voiced by WCC leadership, staff and customers about the current inquiry process. WCC is commended for developing an inquiry process that allows customers to ask questions about how an incident was handled, as they have a real need to understand the details of their service delivery, from the initial call to the last unit leaving the scene. The goal was honorable, as WCC wanted to acknowledge the concerns of their constituents and attempt to address them as effectively as possible. As would be expected, there has been some discomfort with the telecommunicators, as this is a new level of scrutiny related to their work and adds pressure to their already challenging work environment. The supervisors also experienced a significant increase in workload as the inquiries began to come in. The goal of the inquiry process should be to evolve into an extension of the QA process, whereby WCC leadership encourages and welcomes feedback regarding their performance, from the public as well as their constituents. As performance challenges are addressed through additional training, increasing experience levels and operational/technical adjustments, the frequency of inquiries will decrease naturally. The director has been reporting findings back to customers, but due to the volume of inquiries and the perception that there is no clear strategy to address performance problems, customers have yet to appreciate the value. Customers are encouraged to continue to make inquiries, but also to be patient as WCC staff gains experience with the inquiry process, analyzing the data and identifying effective strategies. It is essential that the director articulate those strategies clearly, so customers understand how their concerns are going to be

handled and, where appropriate, how progress will be demonstrated. It is unreasonable for customers to receive any information pertaining to individual action within WCC, as those are Waukesha County personnel matters. Customers must respect the professional boundaries of WCC internal matters, regardless of knowledge of specific telecommunicators or their previous employment, and instead focus on the outcomes related to WCC's performance. WCC staff must also respect that professional boundary and not share information regarding individual performance even with those with whom they might have had previous ties. Customers and citizens making inquiries should receive feedback after an inquiry, not related to individuals, but describing the findings and reassuring them that the matter has been handled by training, operational/technical adjustment or other corrective measures. And, for WCC stakeholders who are reviewing the overall response to inquiries, the director should categorize the inquiries into appropriate dispositions. It should be noted that a similar inquiry process is important for customer-agency personnel or the telecommunicators will quickly realize the double-standard. WCC and its customer departments should establish a clear process for inquiries forwarded to one another that respects the chain-of-command and filters them for their reasonableness. Finally, public safety is a chaotic endeavor that honorable professionals attempt to control every day, but much of it remains in the hands of imperfect humans. This means errors will occur and even re-occur at times. The objective is to mitigate the causes of those errors as aggressively as possible, so the frequency and significance are within acceptable ranges. Effective QA,

including the inquiry process, is a staple for any organization striving for excellence.

Recommendations

- *(24a) The process for inquiries, complaints and allegations of misconduct should be formalized to include:*
    - *Documenting the details of the report, avoiding statements of pre-mature judgment regarding the handling of the incident.*
    - *Assuring the inquiring party that a review of the incident will be conducted and follow-up contact made regarding the results, after the facts are verified.*
    - *Reviewing all information regarding the incident and interviewing involved employees (unless it is validated through other means that the basis of the inquiry is unfounded).*
    - *Conclusion based on the factual information obtained during the review and follow-up callback to the inquiring party.*
    - *Mechanism for coaching, training, counseling or disciplinary action as appropriate for all founded inquiries, complaints or allegations.*
    - *Documentation of each step of the process.*
    - *Review by WCC leadership.*
    - *Periodic analysis of the inquiries, complaints and allegations to identify trends.*

- o *Reporting back to WCC stakeholders of categories of inquiries and the strategies for addressing each (i.e., retrained employee, scheduled for retraining of all employees on certain date, technical change made to alleviate problem, etc.).*

- *(24b) The procedures for inquiries should be coordinated with customer departments to ensure an equal path for concerns of a similar nature and to ensure they are filtered for their reasonableness.*

- *(24c) Options for a collective review of critical incidents involving all entities involved at a face-to-face meeting with equal opportunity for voicing concerns and collaborating on strategies for addressing any challenges that surface.*

- *(24d) The procedures for citizen inquiries should be posted appropriately to encourage feedback from the ultimate customers of this service, the communities WCC serves. This can be accomplished by adding the information or a link to the Web site, posting in customer-agency lobbies, public access or government television channels, etc.*

10. <u>General Observations</u>

In addition to the specific areas listed above, the MAAP team provides the following general observations regarding WCC.

Waukesha County is poised to add customers to WCC. Although the intent of this report is to encourage continued development of those partnerships, the team believes it may not be in the best interest of WCC to push too quickly for further consolidation. It would likely serve all stakeholders, current and those being considered, if WCC staff is given adequate time to focus on existing challenges before absorbing more. As these recommendations are implemented and progress assessed, the most effective timeline for adding new agencies should emerge.

Recommendation:

- *(25) Give WCC staff an adequate opportunity to meet current challenges prior to introducing new customers.*

The team was concerned about the level of negative media attention. It is counterproductive to the goals of the public safety delivery system in Waukesha County and specifically to the goals of WCC as a developing communications center. Public safety is the ultimate team environment and strong partnerships

should span the boundaries of jurisdiction and governance. Officials voicing their concerns through the media and subsequent counter-statements serve no positive objective. In fact, they tend to undermine the entire public safety team in the eyes of the public. Negative media stories were also recently identified, in APCO's Project RETAINS, as one of the top contributors to telecommunicator turnover across the country. There is a real need for media partnerships with public safety, but they must be managed responsibly, like all other partnerships, and not used as a tool to supplant communication or push an agenda outside of the governance process.

Media activities must be coordinated more between WCC and the stakeholders. Regardless of frustration, performance challenges from all sides must be discussed and a common message voiced to the media that public safety is a difficult job and the goal of all public safety officials is to make the "delivery system" (WCC, police, fire and EMS) as flawless as possible.

And lastly, WCC leadership must avoid relating internal challenges to specific individuals or groups of individuals within WCC. The goal is teamwork and WCC challenges must be met by WCC as a whole, with the ultimate responsibility resting on the shoulders of the director. When there is a problem, regardless of who makes a mistake or what group is perceived to have weaknesses, organizational performance should be portrayed holistically when communicating with anyone other than internal WCC staff.

Recommendations:

- *(26a) Institute a coordinated concept for public safety media interactions and focus comments on the operation directly overseen, avoiding speculative comments about other public safety entities who can answer those questions more accurately.*

- *(26b) Organizational performance should be portrayed holistically when communicating with anyone other than internal WCC staff, including media, customers and stakeholders. The focus should remain on overall WCC performance challenges, the steps taken to address those challenges and the progress demonstrated.*

Lack of recognition is a common telecommunicator complaint. Much like at WCC, performance challenges often overshadow the positive contributions being made by the staff every day. WCC leadership should be commended for their initial efforts to begin a culture of positive reinforcement, such as quality-assurance recognition and the new bulletin board that proudly displays their accolades. The challenge for the telecommunicators is to avoid the urge to downplay these recognition efforts or criticize them as disingenuous. Telecommunicators should embrace the efforts being made on their behalf because, just like the center as a whole, a recognition initiative must start somewhere and build from there. The challenge for WCC leadership is to enhance and sustain this initiative as a formal program into the future.

Recommendations:

- *(27) Implement an employee-recognition program that includes what WCC leadership has already done and adds the following:*

  o *An awards program that provides recognition for excellent performance monthly, quarterly or annually depending on the level of support. Award winners should be considered for APCO's Telecommunicator of the Year Award (see www.apcointl.org).*

  o *An appropriate celebration of National Public Safety Telecommunications Week in April each year. The telecommunicators could provide input as to how they would like to be recognized for the valuable service they provide to the community. Some suggestions are a visit from the county executive on each shift, a barbeque provided by the customer agencies as thanks for their hard work, donated gifts from the customer agencies for a raffle or a simple gift for each communications specialist.*

While the team is not advocating that WCC take on the challenge at this time, their intermediate future goals (3 to 5 years) should include accreditation by an organization such as CALEA, the commission for accreditation of law enforcement agencies. CALEA partnered with APCO to co-write public safety

communications standards.[5]   WCC is a good candidate for CALEA Communications Center Accreditation.   Preparation for accreditation requires that an organization thoroughly review their business practices and conduct an initial assessment with CALEA-trained assessors to ensure they meet the highest industry standards.   Periodic reassessments validate that the organization is maintaining the best business practices and meeting standards.

Recommendations:

- *(28a) In 3 to 5 years, become accredited through an organization such as CALEA, the Commission for Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies.*
- *(28b) In order to achieve the goal of accreditation, WCC will require adequate support from Waukesha County, such as funding the initiative and potential staff support for the significant administrative workload of managing accreditation.*

This concludes the APCO MAAP Report.   The team thanks the WCC staff, Waukesha County leadership and all stakeholders who took the time to invest in their communications center by meeting with us.   Due to the anticipation of the team's visit, it is recommended that this report be distributed as widely as possible, especially making it available to all the WCC staff.   They need to be aware that, although their work is being scrutinized, the overall success of a

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[5] http://www.calea.org/newweb/PSCAP/PROGRAM.htm

consolidated center requires hard work on everyone's part and requesting this visit reflects a genuine desire to achieve excellence.

Final Recommendation:

- *(29) Distribute this report as widely as possible as an indication of commitment to achieving excellence at WCC.*

Appendix A – Summary of Recommendations

These recommendations are explained in further detail in the report.

- *(1a) High-level leadership from the organizations involved in WCC should hold a special series of meetings focused on:*
  - *Changing the current political environment and committing to one that supports the forward progress of WCC.*
  - *Solidifying the relationship as stakeholders in WCC, embracing the consolidation for the future and putting the politics of the past to rest.*
  - *Reaffirming support for the current WCC leadership or evaluating changes that would best serve future interests of WCC.*
  - *Solidifying support for the operational decision-making process (i.e., protocols committees and dispatch operations committee) to determine if the structure is effective and balanced, what level of influence they have, how are WCC operational impacts balanced with customer demands, who makes final decisions and what the process is if no consensus can be reached.*
  - *Potential changes to the governance model, including a consortium model that would allow the larger stakeholders to have an equal share in governing and financing the center. (All stakeholders*

would need to have an adequate voice for operational decisions in any new model being considered.)

- *(1b) The same leadership group is encouraged to meet periodically after the special series of meetings, to continue developing those partnerships. That synergy will not only support success at WCC, but could establish WCC as the focal point for public safety in Waukesha County. (Other agreements can be forged around a successful consolidation, such as shared regional resources, combined/regional training, mutual-aid agreements, regional grant opportunities, etc.)*

- *(2a) WCC should evaluate the CAD system configuration with the vendor to determine what if any alternatives are available to:*
  - *Increase speed of processing (not only how quickly the system processor performs, but how quickly telecommunicators manipulate the system); and,*
  - *Increase the accuracy of location data (not only accuracy of the street names, but aliases that capture street-name changes as a citizen travels the roadway, which is frequent in Waukesha County).*
- *(2b) If the current configuration cannot be enhanced to meet performance objectives of WCC, they should consider an accelerated replacement of the system or accept that the performance goals of the highest possible levels of accuracy and speed may not be attainable.*

- *(2c) For future CAD system selection, the priority has to be on the mission of WCC. Call-processing and dispatching functionality has to be the highest priority and other roles that have the luxury of discretionary time (records, jail management, administration, etc.) should assume a lower priority.*

- *(2d) For future system design/acceptance, ensure that "work-arounds" are mitigated by developing an extremely detailed task analysis that becomes the system requirements and culminates with a stringent acceptance test. It would also be beneficial for WCC staff to visit larger/busier centers to observe their CAD system functionality before attempting to develop or have a consultant develop the system requirements.*

- *(3a) As part of the CAD system decision, evaluate the potential of transitioning to an ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute) interfaced mapping component.*

- *(3b) Regardless of the direction with CAD, mapping will always be a presence at WCC. Therefore, a dedicated GIS (Geographic Information System) staff position is needed to advocate for 9-1-1/dispatch operations and interface with Waukesha County GIS.*

- *(4) After the CAD system decision has been made, implement an adequate interface to the phone system that will allow wireline and*

wireless 9-1-1 calls to be plotted automatically upon answer by the call-receiver.

- *(5) Modify the call-receiving procedures to exclude all inefficient practices that are deemed counterproductive to call-processing efficiency goals, such as obtaining investigatory/RMS information from Good Samaritan callers and medical patients in crisis. Redirecting tasks is a strategy identified within Project RETAINS as related to working conditions and job complexity.*

- *(6) Leverage available technology to create efficient mobile-data processes requiring no intervention by the telecommunicators.*

- *(7a) Until WCC can have the Waukesha County risk manager verify that the envisioned use of the logging recorder is consistent with privacy protections in the state of Wisconsin, remote access should be discontinued.*

- *(7b) If the risk manager determines that there is acceptable risk involved in remotely accessing the logging recorder, his/her office and/or the Waukesha County attorney should assist WCC in drafting an appropriate policy related to use and security of remote-access software and consider requiring that a user agreement be signed by each individual who requests access.*

- *(7c) Notwithstanding the operational advantage that the remote-access software has provided some departments, the feature that allows monitoring 9-1-1 calls in real-time does not allow for WCC intervention to avoid releasing sensitive information. Therefore, the policy should require an adequate buffer of time (i.e., 24 hours) before departments may access the system for incident review.*

- *(8) Once the training objectives outlined in this report can be accomplished and the CAD system is optimized, only then will it be possible to assess the Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) Program. The assessment should include:*
  - *Review of call-processing speed to determine if effectively trained call-receivers can use the program within the acceptable range of call-processing times.*
  - *Assessment of the potential modifications to the current EMD program or the method in which it is used to achieve the efficiency objectives of WCC. (This may require consultation with both the EMD and CAD system vendors to recommend a more efficient process.)*
  - *Assessment of other EMD programs that may be a better fit for WCC and their stakeholders.*

- An evaluation of the actual need for EMD in Waukesha County, considering any other operational alternatives that may result in appropriate responses (within WCC or the departments).

- *(9a) Assess the value of adopting NFPA Standard 1221 as it relates to emergency incident-processing. As with any performance measurement, there is a need to develop a process to measure the compliance and action plans developed to address non-compliance.*

- *(9b) If an alternative performance-measurement model is embraced, adequate time for addressing the recommendations in this report should be provided and progress satisfactorily demonstrated. Only then should a trial be conducted for at least 60 days, with the objective of benchmarking performance dimensions established by WCC leadership and stakeholders. Future goals would include managing upward trends from the benchmarked performance measurements.*

- *(10a) WCC should validate that their 9-1-1 trunking capacity is adequate based on NENA Standard 03-006, E9-1-1 Call Congestion Management.*

- *(10b) A similar validation should be conducted with the business lines as a baseline, but also considering local factors that may influence the needed capacity.*

- *(10c) Start exploring now with your phone-system vendor the implications of adding queuing, recorded announcements, ACD (Automatic Call*

Distribution) and forced-answer functionality. WCC may not implement all these functions immediately, but they can be evaluated for their value in meeting efficiency goals.

- *(11a) Evaluate the permanent patch arrangement between TG2 and TG3 to determine if the call volume, as well as the number of law enforcement units supported, is most appropriately handled by a single dispatcher or whether it would justify two positions, possibly during peak call-load periods. If it is determined that a single dispatcher is sufficient for this responsibility on a 24/7 basis, WCC should consider eliminating the permanent patch arrangement and assigning all the units to either TG2 or TG3. This could free up a talk group for other purposes if needed. In the future, if additional law enforcement agencies are added as partners to the WCC, it would need to re-evaluate this arrangement.*

- *(11b) In order to provide a more effective law enforcement response and to enhance officer safety, WCC should consider a policy to simulcast priority law enforcement calls and requests for backup across multiple talk groups. In situations described previously where the sheriff's department responds to a priority call or needs urgent backup on the interstate or park-and-ride station, this process would alert police agencies with jurisdiction over the same area that may have units closer.*

- *(11c) If there is not already a policy in place to use a common talk group or patched talk groups during multi-agency incidents, one should be*

developed. This provides a mechanism for law enforcement personnel involved in a common incident to communicate directly and immediately without having to rely on a dispatcher relay system which has a built-in delay and increased potential for error or miscommunications. This system should tie in directly with the use of the Incident Command System structure with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. In the event of a multi-agency, multi-discipline incident which involves law enforcement and fire-rescue, a unified command structure is applicable, which, depending on the magnitude of the incident, should have an established communications plan that addresses the operational needs of all components involved in the incident. This plan can be modified, expanded or reduced as the incident progresses and conditions change.

- *(11d) The function of the teletype/information operators should be evaluated to consider an arrangement where a specific talk group or talk groups are established for law enforcement personnel to use for the purpose of requesting queries from the local, state and national criminal-justice computer system and RMS. This would allow law enforcement officers who are not running the requests from mobile computers to switch radio talk groups and communicate directly with a dispatcher to initiate the request and receive the response. The volume of activity associated with this function would dictate whether one for each dispatch position is required or whether a lesser number could be used. If implemented, policy associated with this arrangement must require close interaction*

between teletype dispatchers and the primary law enforcement dispatchers in the event a query resulted in the need for backup units such as encountering a wanted person, stolen vehicle, etc. It is also imperative for dispatchers to be aware of which radio talk-group units under their responsibility are operating on at any given time. This is a common arrangement in public safety communications centers of similar or larger size as WCC that handle law enforcement responsibilities.

- *(12a) A psychological assessment by a forensic psychologist who specializes in public safety should be added to the selection process to identify candidates with the appropriate psychological profile for telecommunicators (and not the same profile for police officers or firefighters).*

- *(12b) Increase the keyboarding requirement to 30 words per minute and re-evaluate the need to increase it further in the future, as demands rise and efficiency becomes even more critical.*

- *(13a) With the assistance of the Human Resources Department, identify counseling resources that can assist relocated employees with the assimilation process into WCC, similar to those used in other industries when involuntary career changes occur. Make the opportunity voluntary, confidential and outside WCC to get the best possible result.*

- *(13b) These employees should also be encouraged to access Waukesha County's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) in the future as needed.*

- *(14a) Waukesha County should explore an additional management position to compliment the director and take responsibility for operations, training and quality-enhancement initiatives. The goal would be to allow the director to focus on managing the center overall, setting the leadership direction and coordinating with high-level stakeholders. In a partnership with the director, the training & operations manager could represent WCC on various operational and technical workgroups, liaise with customer representatives on operational matters and oversee the training and quality-assurance programs. A future consideration would be having the supervisors report to the training & operations manager, but initially this individual will be in high demand.*

- *(14b) If the training & operations manager is supported, the best opportunity for success would be for the training & operations manager to have an operational and training background from a contemporary public safety communications center, preferably a consolidated center. The successful candidate should have or be required to develop shortly after selection, the following skills/training:*
  - *Job task-analysis techniques,*
  - *Training-content development,*
  - *Adult-learning styles,*

- o *Contemporary training-delivery techniques and mechanisms,*

- o *Performance measurement, to include analysis of quality assurance, inquiries, incident-processing statistics and other relevant operational data,*

- o *Excellent customer-service techniques; and,*

- o *Effective supervisory techniques/skills (if determined that supervisors will report to this individual).*

- *(15a) WCC should recruit aggressively to fill any open positions as soon as possible.*

- *(15b) Waukesha County should support WCC by temporarily authorizing at least seventeen percent over-staffing, which is the national average turnover rate for communications centers (WCC is much higher currently), allowing the best possible opportunity for the staff to become fully productive in the near future.*

- *(15c) Waukesha County should support the WCC director in attending an APCO Project RETAINS educational session as soon as possible, to allow future assessment of the staffing model and to learn more about retention techniques identified during the project.*

- *(16) Prioritize and provide the following training to the supervisors:*
  - o *Basic communications center supervision techniques, including such topics as stress management (theirs and their subordinates),*

evaluation/coaching techniques, dealing with disruptive behavior in a high-liability risk environment, public safety customer service, etc.

- o *County human-resources professionals should arrange for more generalized training, including giving/receiving constructive criticism, conflict resolution, emotional maturity in the workplace, team-building, attendance strategies (FMLA familiarization, etc.), effective use of disciplinary action, etc.*

- o *The director should facilitate and participate in leadership training as a group with the supervisors and other management employees. The focus of this training should be identifying what WCC leadership is doing well, what could be done better and what needs to be started. Also, strategies, action plans and timelines to get those things done and begin to change the culture from "putting out fires" to one of "reaching center excellence".*

- o *Technical application user training to allow all supervisors to become more proficient and reduce errors related to all systems, such as the scheduling application, quality-assurance applications, radio consoles, CAD/mapping applications, etc.*

- *(17a) The director would benefit from demonstrating clearly that the supervisors are being held to equitable standards of performance and accountability.*

- *(17b) Opportunities for training and other assignments should be offered in an equitable manner.*

- *(17c) As supervisors receive more training, the expectations should rise by setting individual goals and demonstrating results.*

- *(17d) Given proper training and clear objectives, the supervisors will then need to take ownership of their performance as the core leadership of WCC, by setting common goals for the leadership group to attain together and periodically reporting back to the director on their progress. Supervisor unity has to be a top priority.*

- *(17e) Supervisor meetings should evolve to include a component of repetitive training and review of leadership expectations by the director.*

- *(18a) Develop an initial supervisor training program that includes all supervisory and administrative functions, but also has a heavy focus on operations to ensure that they have a thorough understanding of the positions they oversee.*

- *(18a) Develop an initial supervisor training program that includes all supervisory and administrative functions, but also has a heavy focus on operations to ensure they have a thorough understanding of the positions they oversee.*

- *(18b) Using the new supervisor training program, validate what level of training all current supervisors have and provide training as needed.*

- *(19) To complement the current training program, develop a formal process with minimum time requirements and competency validation before releasing a trainee to work without direct supervision of a Communications Training Officer (CTO).*

- *(20) Develop a repetitive training program that includes quick bursts of training targeting specific performance challenges or the highest risk/lowest frequency tasks performed by WCC dispatchers, then use the shift-briefing time and slow time on shifts to conduct the repetitive training.*

- *(21a) Implement a continuing-education program that includes periodic retraining of telecommunicators specific to their duties three to four times a year. The program should include any training-certification requirements.*

- *(21b) Support telecommunicator training by outside resources, such as seminars, conferences, training meetings, etc. To add more overall value, also require that the telecommunicators bring back the information and share it with the others at WCC by teaching or developing a training bulletin for everyone's benefit. If financial resources do not allow frequent attendance at training events, it is strongly recommended that WCC support telecommunicators' participation in online training courses or coordinate resources with other local agency's to share training expertise.*

- *(22) Implement a remedial training program where the objectives are to identify telecommunicators who need extra help, create a non-threatening and respectful environment conducive to learning and dedicate time to reviewing and practicing with them.*

- *(23) The quality-assurance (QA) program should be enhanced to monitor all performance and compliance with all policy/procedure, including:*
  - *Development of performance dimensions to evaluate, such as "demonstrates a sense of urgency" or "follows established protocols."*
  - *Development of standards where possible to measure against, such as "entered the initial incident in 30 seconds" or "alerted responding units within in 10 seconds."*
  - *Commitment to number of samples/frequency of samples.*
  - *Initial data used as benchmark for future comparison in areas such as improved call-processing speed.*
  - *Individual performance results, good and bad, reviewed with the staff, including periodic statistics reflecting ongoing rate of success.*
  - *Periodic analysis of data to determine systemic problems or training needs.*
  - *Inform and update stakeholders on progress concerning QA goals, illustrating the data in an understandable format, such as a series of graphs.*

- *(24a) The process for inquiries, complaints and allegations of misconduct should be formalized to include:*
  - o *Documenting the details of the report, avoiding statements of pre-mature judgment regarding the handling of the incident.*
  - o *Assuring the inquiring party that a review of the incident will be conducted and follow-up contact made regarding the results, after the facts are verified.*
  - o *Reviewing all information regarding the incident and interviewing involved employees (unless it is validated through other means that the basis of the inquiry is unfounded).*
  - o *Conclusion based on the factual information obtained during the review and follow-up callback to the inquiring party.*
  - o *Mechanism for coaching, training, counseling or disciplinary action as appropriate for all founded inquiries, complaints or allegations.*
  - o *Documentation of each step of the process.*
  - o *Review by WCC leadership.*
  - o *Periodic analysis of the inquiries, complaints and allegations to identify trends.*
  - o *Reporting back to WCC stakeholders of categories of inquiries and the strategies for addressing each (i.e., retrained employee, scheduled for retraining of all employees on certain date, technical change made to alleviate problem, etc.).*

- *(24b) The procedures for inquiries should be coordinated with customer departments to ensure an equal path for concerns of a similar nature and to ensure they are filtered for their reasonableness.*

- *(24c) Options for a collective review of critical incidents involving all entities involved at a face-to-face meeting with equal opportunity for voicing concerns and collaborating on strategies for addressing any challenges that surface.*

- *(24d) The procedures for citizen inquiries should be posted appropriately to encourage feedback from the ultimate customers of this service, the communities WCC serves. This can be accomplished by adding the information or a link to the Web site, posting in customer-agency lobbies, public access or government television channels, etc.*

- *(25) Give WCC staff an adequate opportunity to meet current challenges prior to introducing new customers.*

- *(26a) Institute a coordinated concept for public safety media interactions and focus comments on the operation directly overseen, avoiding speculative comments about other public safety entities who can answer those questions more accurately.*

- *(26b) Organizational performance should be portrayed holistically when communicating with anyone other than internal WCC staff, including media, customers and stakeholders. The focus should remain on overall*

WCC performance challenges, the steps taken to address those challenges and the progress demonstrated.

- *(27) Implement an employee-recognition program that includes what WCC leadership has already done and adds the following:*
  - o *An awards program that provides recognition for excellent performance monthly, quarterly or annually depending on the level of support. Award winners should be considered for APCO's Telecommunicator of the Year Award (see www.apcointl.org).*
  - o *An appropriate celebration of National Public Safety Telecommunications Week in April each year. The telecommunicators could provide input as to how they would like to be recognized for the valuable service they provide to the community. Some suggestions are a visit from the county executive on each shift, a barbeque provided by the customer agencies as thanks for their hard work, donated gifts from the customer agencies for a raffle or a simple gift for each communications specialist.*

- *(28a) In 3 to 5 years, become accredited through an organization such as CALEA, the Commission for Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies.*
- *(28b) In order to achieve the goal of accreditation, WCC will require adequate support from Waukesha County, such as funding the initiative*

and potential staff support for the significant administrative workload of managing accreditation.

- *(29) Distribute this report as widely as possible as an indication of commitment to achieving excellence at WCC.*

Waukesha
COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

Memo

To: William Cade, 911 Services & Communications Center Operations
APCO International

From: James Richter, Labor Relations Manager

Date: 3/3/2006

Re: Member Assistance Advisory Program Study – Initial Waukesha County Study Response

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Waukesha County has received the Member Assistance Advisory Program (MAAP) report from APCO. We have found the report to be comprehensive and complete. The report addresses the areas the County wanted to have studied and evaluated.

The County greatly appreciates the time and effort put into this study by the project team: Mark Morgan, Randy Kerr, and John Gibson. We also want to thank the representatives of the DOC, police, fire, and technical protocol Committees as well as the representatives from the various agencies, which Waukesha County Communication serves. Lastly, the County wants to thank the Telecommunicators, Telecommunication Supervisors, and management at Waukesha County Communications (WCC) for their cooperation, input, and assistance in this study.

Overall Waukesha County agrees with the conclusions and recommendations within this report. The purpose of this response is to provide clarification on certain observations and recommendations and to provide information on what steps WCC has already taken to address some of the identified challenges.

We understand the recommendations can be categorized into three major areas:

- Training

- Customer Relations

- Technology / CAD

The County will develop a comprehensive and detailed action plan to address the recommendations. We look forward to working with our customers in the continued development and growth of Waukesha County Communications.

Recommendation #1

Response

We are confident that as Waukesha County Communications matures as an organization and process improvements are put into place, the political environment will also change. We strongly agree that strengthening the relationships is important and politics need to be put in the past.

The WCC is a County function, which must decide how it will best meet the variety of needs of all its customers. There is a delicate balance that must be maintained in the operational decision – making process. We agree with this reports conclusion that input from our customers is important; and that Waukesha County Communications needs to make the final decisions when there is no consensus.

The consortium model suggested in the report was the original structure sought by the County. However, the inability of the stakeholders to agree on issues of governance and cost sharing required the County to take the lead in funding and operations in order to make WCC a reality.

Waukesha County welcomes and encourages continual dialogue of the leadership groups.

Recommendation #2:   Waukesha County Communications Should Evaluate the CAD System

Response

The County agrees with the approach suggested by the study team. We will work with the CAD Vendor to determine what efficiencies can be achieved through alternate configurations. Waukesha County Communications recognizes that our ability to have quick processing and accurate locations is impacted by the data base inability to adequately handle commonplace names, intersections, and aliases. This is a priority for Waukesha County Communications and we will work with the vendor to accomplish this goal.

We have begun to explore other CAD systems in similar and larger communications centers throughout the country in the event the current CAD configuration cannot be changed to address the performance obligation. Replacement of the system needs to be done only after exhausting other alternatives.

Recommendation #3:   Mapping / GIS

Response

The County will conduct further review and evaluation of the mapping process as well as the need and ability to provide additional GIS resources to WCC. To determine the extent this recommendation can be accomplished with our current resources, we will be evaluating the duties and responsibilities of the current staff and what options we may have before looking at either adding staff or using outside resources.

Recommendation #4:   Interface between CAD Mapping and Phone System

Response

WCC will research the mapping capabilities of the current phone system to include work effort, costs, and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the mapping systems currently in use at the Center.

Recommendation #5:   Modifications of Call-Recovery Procedures

Response

Waukesha County Communications staff are required to collect certain information including middle initials, dates of birth, and other facts of <u>most</u> callers. The call-takers are required to update the master name file in the records management system, which adds to the workload.

We agree with the report recommendation; Waukesha County Communications will continue to work with our partners to identify the current information needed and eliminate the unnecessary data. WCC recognizes that there needs to be a balance of information required by our customers for records management purposes, but not at the expense of the primary objective of dispatching emergency personnel.

Recommendation #6:   Leverage Technology to Create Efficient MDT Processes

Response

This practice was initiated so some departments would not have to complete a separate written report, but could use the CAD system to collect this records information.

This practice adds radio traffic and takes the Telecommunicator attention away from pending calls.

WCC is already working on an interface with the CAD; the current Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) system is being replaced with a Mobile Data Computer (MDC), which will allow data to flow from dispatch to field units and back. The infrastructure is scheduled to be replaced in the 1st quarter of this year; the Spillman interface is scheduled for the 2nd quarter.

Recommendation #7:   Real Time Monitoring of 911 Calls

Response

We agree that this issue needs further study and review. The County Corporation Counsel and Risk Manager are currently evaluating this aspect of the report and the study recommendation. We understand this issue has a wide-ranging impact and has been dealt with in other centers.

Recommendation #8:   Emergency Medical Dispatch

Response

Waukesha County Communications stopped using the electronic version of Pro QA (medical dispatch software) due to a technology issue between the EMD software and the CAD. Use of the manual card set is less efficient because of the time it takes to enter information into the CAD.

The County agrees that once we have focused on training and improving overall efficiency of the CAD, the EMD program can then be evaluated. The review will assess the current EMD program as well as alternatives. The County recognizes there is a cost associated with a new system. We also recognize that increasing the call taking and dispatching of EMD is a paramount objective.

Recommendation #9:   Dispatching / Process Time

Response

We agree with the report that the ninety (90) second dispatcher time is a goal not based on any measurable standard.

The County will evaluate the NFPA standard and determine if this is a measure that we should adopt as a guideline. The expectations of the customers and protocols committee may be inconsistent with these established standards.

The County also agrees that establishing a benchmark that is measurable and responsible is a practical approach. We are confident that we can manage upward from this benchmark once the workforce is stable and new training has been implemented, and technology improvements and enhancements are implemented.

Recommendation #10: Inadequate 911 or Business Trunks

Response

The County will work with both SBC and our phone system vendor to obtain system capabilities and cost information. WCC has also begun an initiative to place 800MHz trunked radios in each of the County PSAP's in order for each PSAP to have an alternative method of relaying 911 calls for service information to each other in the event their phone systems and/or the phone network becomes overloaded. The radios have been purchased through grant dollars and will be provided at no cost to the County PSAP's and are expected to be installed by the end of the 2nd quarter of this year.

Recommendation #11: Talk Groups

Response

WCC staff has requested that Radio Services track talk group activity for the month of March and will analyze this information with other data captured during this time period. Staff will also work with police protocols to address the simulcast and patching issues identified in this study. The issue of separate talk group / function for teletype information was addressed with the police protocols committee during the formation of the center and was rejected by the committee because of possible officer safety issues.

Recommendation #12: Pre-Employment Process

Response

The County has utilized psychological exams in the past for corrections, law enforcement, and dispatchers. Our experience has suggested that the process did not screen candidates as intended. The Human Resources Division will re-evaluate the selection process and will consider the implementation of psychological exams.

The Human Resources staff will evaluate the key boarding skills of the most recently hired telecommunicators. We will also look at Telecommunicators who are identified as very successful and those who did not pass their probationary periods. If warranted the keyboard skills requirement can be increased to 30 wpm.

Recommendation #13: Change in Work Environment and Impact on Employees

Response

The County has a very successful and confidential EAP program. Employees will be advised and educated on the program. They will be informed how to access the services on a confidential and personal basis. The County also has access to EAP for training purposes and can consider using some of these training resources for employee training on group dynamics, teamwork, dealing with change.

Recommendation #14: Waukesha County Communications Training Function

Response

The County understands and agrees with the recommendation on the need for a focused approach on training. Having a properly trained staff is critical to the success of Waukesha County Communications, not only from the operations perspective, but also as it impacts staff turnover and relationships.

The County will reevaluate the need for the new Programs and Projects Analyst position in light of the strong recommendation for a Training and Operations Coordinator. Given the other recommendations in the report, which place a significant emphasis on training and technical operations, this recommendation will be a priority.

Recommendation #15: Staffing Levels

Response

We agree with the observation and recommendation to continue to separate out the call-taking and dispatching functions.

The County agrees that in order to break out of the cycle of turnover we need to have a commitment to properly and thoroughly training the new staff. We recognized this will take a commitment of time, which can result in more than expected overtime.

The County has authorized since the inception of Waukesha County Communications the ability to overfill Telecommunication positions. The County has authorized four overfills for Telecommunicator; we will consider an additional two overfills. The additional overfills will bring us to the staffing levels recommended in the report. These overfills will be eliminated as the workforce stabilizes.

The Director and a member of the Human Resources staff are scheduled to attend a Project Retains seminar on March 22nd.

Recommendation #16: Training

Response

One of the major recommendations contained in this study is training. Training not only of the Telecommunicators, but also the supervisors, and manager. The County is committed to this training effort and has already begun the process to address the concerns that were identified during the exit interview of the study team.

Human Resources have begun to identify training needs of the supervisors. Training sessions have been held on the following areas:

- Teamwork and Teambuilding

- Employee Discipline and Performance Management

- Attendance/Sick leave / Family Medical Leave

- Labor contract administration

The supervisory team has committed to meeting two times a month as a group to participate in training and round table discussions. These meetings have already resulted in the establishment of better rapport between the supervisory team. Fifty percent of the management team has turned over since the Center opened. This turnover had a significant impact on operations. The County has confidence that the current supervisors will be successful in helping Waukesha County Communications achieve its goals.

The Supervisors have a desire to be consistent in their actions and to be accountable. The Human Resources staff will continue to directly provide or arrange for training on identified needs.

The supervisors will participate in technical application training. This will allow them to be more proficient and knowledgeable in addressing employee issues.

Recommendation #17: Supervisory / Management Training

Response

The management team at Waukesha County Communications is a very dedicated and professional group. They have a strong and sincere desire for Waukesha County Communications to be successful. They will be an integral part of the future success.

The Director will meet and work with the supervisor staff to determine supervisory training preferences, provide opportunities for special projects and assignments as well as to establish clear lines of authority and accountability. We will provide supervisors with increased opportunity for input.

Recommendation #18: Technical Training for Supervisor

Response

We agree with this recommendation. This was also identified and commented on in recommendations #16. A Supervisor training program, which includes functional training, can also be used to develop Telecommunicators who express interest in future supervisory openings and in the future for individuals identified as being Telecommunicator in charge.

Recommendation #19: Telecommunication Competency Evaluation

Response

The County agrees that a formal evaluation process prior to the assignment of a Telecommunicator to working alone is a good idea. The time requirements will vary depending on the individual's prior experience, skills, and ability to learn.

Recommendation #20: Targeted Training on Identifiable Needs for High Risk/Low

Frequency Training

Response

We agree the use of the shift briefing time can be used for this type of training. The reinforcement of certain policies and procedures on a regular basis hopefully will prevent performance issues.

Recommendation #21: Continuing Education Program

Response

The County recognizes the value of continuing education for our employees. We will have and will continue to look for cost effective ways of providing continuing education to our employees. An on-going training program will be developed and implemented, which may include on-line and web based training, as well as targeted specific topics for one on one training with supervisors and the training coordinator.

Recommendation #22: Remedial Training

Response

There is a significant commitment to the initial training and development of Telecommunicators. In the past Waukesha County Communications have identified employees who needed additional training to reinforce the skills they were initially taught. We will continue to provide this type of training and reinforcement to employees so they can be successful and effective.

Recommendation #23: Quality Assurance Program

Response

The study team has recognized that Waukesha County Communications has implemented a Quality Assurance program and have implemented several initial efforts at employee recognition. We are committed to this program. Providing feedback to staff and our partners is also an important element of our Quality Assurance initiatives. We encourage our partners to share in this effort. Recognition from others besides the management of Waukesha County Communications is important to the staff and their personal growth.

Recommendation #24: Inquiry Process

Response

Waukesha County Communications recognizes the value of the inquiry process. We also understand the implication that if it is not structured properly it can impact operations. The inquiry process at Waukesha County Communications will be formalized and clearly documented to identify opportunities for WCC and our partners to make process improvements. We agree the inquiry process should not focus on an individual but on an event or performance issues. The process will include appropriate follow-up for staff including, but not limited to, coaching, retraining, and employee discipline.

Recommendation #25: General Observations

Response

We agree with this recommendation and understand that as Waukesha County Communication moves forward we need to address several of the key recommendations in this study. We are confident that in the future a number of the issues identified in this report will be resolved and Waukesha County Communications will have additional partners.

Recommendation #26: Media Activities

Response

We strongly agree with the recommendation contained in the report. The staff, management, and our partners have all experienced the negative impacts of the media attention to Waukesha County Communications. It should be a goal between WCC and our partners to have a coordinated approach to media relations so that full and accurate information is released. We hope our partners understand, appreciate, and adopt this recommendation as well.

Recommendation #27: Employee Recognition

Response

Waukesha County Communications has begun efforts to recognize the positive contributions of our employees. One of these efforts has included the establishment of the EMD100 Club, which recognizes Telecommunicators for quality work on EMD calls. We will continue to look for ways to accomplish this objective.

Recommendation #28: Accreditation – Common for Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies

Response

We understand this to be a long-term goal and recommendation. As Waukesha County Communications matures and evolves the County will pursue this recommendation.

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